

**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR HOWARD COUNTY**

**ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 2020-02**

**PHASE II COURTHOUSE ACCESS AND RESTRICTIONS**

WHEREAS, a public health emergency exists based on the outbreak of the coronavirus, COVID-19; and

WHEREAS on May 22, 2020, Chief Judge Mary Ellen Barbera issued an Administrative Order on the Progressive Resumption of Full Function of Judiciary Operations (“Court Re-Opening Plan”) which delineates a five-phase approach to re-opening Maryland Courts, while employing safety measures to continue to support the health and safety of Maryland residents and judiciary personnel; and

WHEREAS, each of the five phases of the Court Re-opening Plan represents an increase in the level of operation within the courthouse. Beginning, June 5, 2020 at 5:00 p.m., we enter Phase II of the Court Re-Opening Plan. The courthouse continues to remain closed to the public with limited exceptions, outlined within this Order; and

WHEREAS, recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges, magistrates and other individuals entering the courthouse buildings, the Circuit Court for Howard County will implement the following procedural and protective measures effective as of June 8, 2020;

NOW THEREFORE, it is ORDERED during Phase II, beginning June 8, 2020, the court house regular business hours remain 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. However, entry is restricted to courthouse employees; counsel, parties and necessary witnesses appearing for a case scheduled on the court docket; credentialed members of the press; and others approved as appropriate by the Administrative Judge. The Clerk’s Office and The Register of Wills will remain closed to the public, except by appointment pursuant to policies established by the Clerk of the Court and the Register of Wills, and it is further

ORDERED the Court shall continue to accept filings, and shall be available to answer telephone calls, emails, and other communications. Individuals who do not have access to MDEC e-filing may file documents in person or by mail. If a person wishes to file a document and is unsure of the filing method, the individual should contact the Clerk’s office by telephone to get instructions for filing; and it is further

ORDERED All judges and magistrates will comply with the Covid-19 Emergency Orders issued by the Court of Appeals of Maryland, including conducting in-person proceedings according to the

guidance issued by the Court of Appeals, Administrative Office of the Courts, and the Governor of Maryland regarding social distancing; maximum group size, and other restrictions and precautions; and it is further

ORDERED all judges and magistrates will use all reasonable efforts to conduct proceedings permitted in Phase II remotely. Remote criminal proceedings must occur by video participation, both the defendant and counsel must appear on camera for the entire proceeding; and it is further

ORDERED the Howard County Sheriff's Office is authorized to screen all persons permitted to enter the courthouse and to refuse entry for persons in circumstances stated below. **Required**

**Screening Upon Entry** is as follows:

1. All persons entering the court building will be required to wear face coverings at all times, unless excused by the Administrative Judge, or by a presiding judge or magistrate during a court proceeding. Individuals will be encouraged to bring cloth face coverings with them, but if the individual does not have a cloth face covering, a disposable face mask will be provided by the court as supplies allow.
2. All persons entering the building are required to respond to health screening questions to determine if they are feeling feverish; have a cough, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing; have been asked to self-quarantine by any doctor, hospital, or health agency; have been diagnosed with, or have been in close contact with a person who is confirmed to have COVID-19. Individuals who indicate yes to any of these questions will be refused admittance to the courthouse.
3. All persons entering the building are subject to a non-contact temperature scan with available equipment. Any person who has an elevated temperature of 100 degrees or greater shall be refused entry into the courthouse.
4. Visitors to the courthouse are encouraged not to bring children under the age of 16 into the courthouse.
5. The Sheriff's Office shall deny entry to any person who refuses to comply with the screening process, or who refuses to wear a face covering.
6. Any person who is refused entry based on health screening, and who is scheduled to appear as counsel, a party, or a witness in a scheduled proceeding, shall provide contact information that will be forwarded to the presiding judicial officer. The presiding judicial officer will determine whether the scheduled matter will be postponed, or whether arrangements can be made for remote participation by the person who was refused entry; and it is further

ORDERED Courthouse Capacity and Social Distancing Policies are as follows:

1. Courtrooms and waiting areas in the courthouse will have signage posted to identify the maximum capacity and social distancing recommendations pursuant to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines.
2. No more than one person or members of one household are be permitted in the public elevator.
3. Access to secure hallways and chambers is restricted to staff unless otherwise authorized by a judicial officer.
4. These guidelines will be monitored and enforced by the Sherriff's Office and any person who refuses to comply with these requirements is subject to removal from the courthouse; and it is further

ORDERED that Court Staff Policies are as follows:

1. Staff experiencing any sign or symptom of illness must stay home from work.
2. Staff must wear face coverings and practice social distancing in a manner consistent with the CDC guidelines. However, courthouse employees who are asymptomatic and not sharing an office space or cubicle with another person, or who can maintain a distance of at least six feet from co-employees or others even though sharing an office, may remove a mask or other nose and mouth covering while in such office.
3. Any employee who tests positive for COVID-19 or has been advised by medical personnel that he or she is presumptively positive, shall self-report immediately to his or her supervisor, self-quarantine and not return to the courthouse until cleared by his or her supervisor.
4. Any employee who has been in contact with a person who tests positive for COVID-19 or has been advised by medical personnel that he or she is presumptively positive, shall self-report immediately to his or her supervisor, self-quarantine and not return to the courthouse until cleared by his or her supervisor.

ORDERED the above polices and restrictions will remain in effect until further order of this court.

**ENTERED**

**JUN - 5 2020**

**CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT  
HOWARD COUNTY**

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William V. Tucker  
County Administrative Judge